

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 291110Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1613

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 1228

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: CISCO 2 - GOS CONCERN OVER CAMPBELL/ROBERTS PLANS

REF: KHARTOUM 1199

1. LEN AND BRUCE CAMPBELL TOLD AMBASSADOR APRIL 29 THAT GWYNNE ROBERTS AND NICK DOWNEY HAD HAD LONG CONVERSATION WITH GOS PUBLIC SECURITY LAST NIGHT DURING WHICH PUBLIC SECURITY REP TOLD THEM ETHIOPIANS WERE, IN EFFECT, OUT TO GET THEM SHOULD THEY CONTINUE WITH PLANNED CROSSING INTO ERITREA. CAMPBELL SAID ROBERTS/DOWNEY STILL PLANNING PROCEED, SINCE PRIMARY PURPOSE THEIR TRIP WAS TO SHOOT ADDITIONAL FILM ON CONDITIONS CIVILIAN POPULATION INSIDE ERITREA AT REQUEST BRITISH VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN CONNECTION FUND-RAISING FOR ERITREAN "REFUGEES." AMBASSADOR COMMENTED PERSONALLY THAT ETHIOPIANS MIGHT WELL BE CONCERNED AT ACTIVITIES ROBERTS/DOWNEY BECAUSE OF THEIR EARLIER FILM. CAMPBELL REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT EPMG HAD MADE STRONG REPRESENTATIONS TO HMG WHEN THAT FILM SHOWN ON BRITISH TELEVISION.

2. BRITISH AMBASSADOR SUBSEQUENTLY REPORTED THAT ROBERTS/DOWNEY HAD AGAIN SEEN PUBLIC SECURITY REP THIS MORNING AND HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER ERITREA. PUBLIC SECURITY REP IN EVIDENT EXASPERATION SEEMS TO HAVE TOLD
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ROBERTS/DOWNEY THAT HE DIDN'T CARE WHETHER HOSTAGES WERE

RELEASED OR NOT.

3. REFERRING DISCUSSION REPORTED PARA 2 REFTTEL, AMBASSADOR TELEPHONED FONMIN MAKKAWI AFTER LEN CAMPBELL'S VISIT TO ASK WHETHER ANY FURTHER WORD YET RECEIVED ON CASE. MAKKAWI WAS UNINFORMED BUT CALLED BACK LATER TO STATE THAT PUBLIC SECURITY DEPT HAD JUST TOLD HIM MESSAGE WAS EXPECTED "AT ANY MOMENT/ THAT "THEY" HAD ARRIVED KARORA BORDER POST. MAKKAWI ASSUMED "THEY" MEANT ALL THREE PLF HOSTAGES. FONMIN WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT PUBLIC SECURITY AUTHORITIES VIEWED ANY ATTEMPT BY CAMPBELL/ROBERTS GROUP TO VISIT ERITREA AS UNSAFE AND UNWISE. PUBLIC SECURITY AUTHORITIES FEARED THAT IF THEY DID GO IN, THIS COULD ONLY SET BACK CURRENT EFFORTS FREE THREE MEN. AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY INFORM LEN CAMPBELL AND COUNSEL GROUP TO DEFER ANY SUCH PLANS. HOWEVER, ROBERTS AND DOWNEY, BEING ENGLISH, WERE NOT SUBJECT SAME DEGREE OF INFLUENCE BY THIS EMBASSY.

4. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH BRITISH AMBASSADOR, IT WAS AGREED WE WOULD COUNSEL OUR RESPECTIVE NATIONALS TO FOLLOW SUDANESE DESIRES AND REMAIN IN KHARTOUM FOR NEXT FEW DAYS, AT LEAST, TO AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS.

5. COMMENT: SUDANESE HAVE SOMEWHAT BELATEDLY WOKEN UP TO FACT THAT VISIT BY ROBERTS/DOWNEY INSIDE ERITREA COULD NOT ONLY COMPLICATE ONGOING PUBLIC SECURITY EFFORTS SECURE RELEASE HOSTAGES BUT ALSO COMPLICATE CONTACTS VIS-A-VIS ETHIOPIA. WE ARE COUNSELLING CAMPBELL TO REMAIN HERE UNTIL SITUATION CLARIFIES AND TO USE HIS INFLUENCE WITH ROBERTS/DOWNEY TO DO THE SAME. WHILE CONTINUING GOS REFERENCES TO EARLY BREAK IN CASE ARE TANTALIZING, WE ARE CONTINUING EVALUATE THEM IN CONSERVATIVELY IN TALKS WITH CAMPBELL HERE AND SUGGEST DEPT DO LIKewise IN ANY CONTACTS WITH RELATIVES AT HOME.
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